

Brookline Preservation Commission Demolition Application Report

Address: 318 Mason Terrace

Petitioner: Stowe Carr

Building type: house

National Register Listing (if Applicable): n/a



Historical/Architectural Significance:

The house was constructed in 1951, making it an early example of international style architecture on Corey Hill. The architects are listed as Diehl, Makintosh and Mansfield on the building permit for this 45' x 32' cedar-sided single family built into the uphill side of Mason Terrace close to the town border with Allston/Brighton.

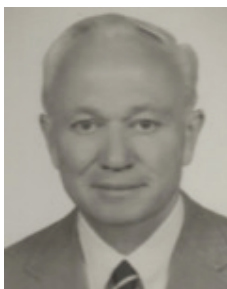
Edward Diehl (1923-2014) was trained as an architect and engineer at Harvard after serving in the US army during World War II. He worked briefly at The Architects' Collaborative, founded by Walter Gropius and seven of his Harvard Design School students. He also worked with Carl Koch on the design of prefabricated Tech Built homes. In 1952, he established his own firm, Edward L. Diehl Associates, on Plympton Street in Cambridge.

The house design was commissioned by the Carr family, who continue to own the property.



Diehl designed buildings for the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown and the Cotting School in Lexington. With Benjamin Thompson he created the plans for the redesign of the Inner Harbor Development in Baltimore and Faneuil Hall Market in Boston.

This house appears to be an early example, perhaps a prototype, of modernist-style prefabrication using modular components of standard sized wall panels and window and door panels. Other character-defining elements include the low-pitch roof and the lack of ornamental detail. Techbuilt, Core House, Deck House and other companies selling modular house plans and building systems would all eventually use these elements in marketing efficient modernist houses, popular in Boston's suburban neighborhoods during the 1960s and 70s.



Architect and engineer
Edward Diehl



west (rear) facade



The house at 318 Mason Terrace meets the following criteria for an initial determination of significance:

- c. The building is associated with one or more significant historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the Town or Commonwealth; and
- d. The building is historically or architecturally significant in terms of its period, style, method of construction, or its association with a significant architect or builder, either by itself or as part of a group.

The house retains its integrity in terms of its location setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling and association. More research is needed to determine the significance of this house since it appears to be an early prototype for Techbuilt and/or Core prefabricated homes.

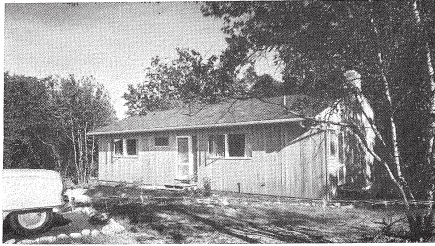


1956 CoreHouse on Walnut Street



1951-52 house next door on Walnut Street

*Houses in Five Fields, from
House & Home (1962)*



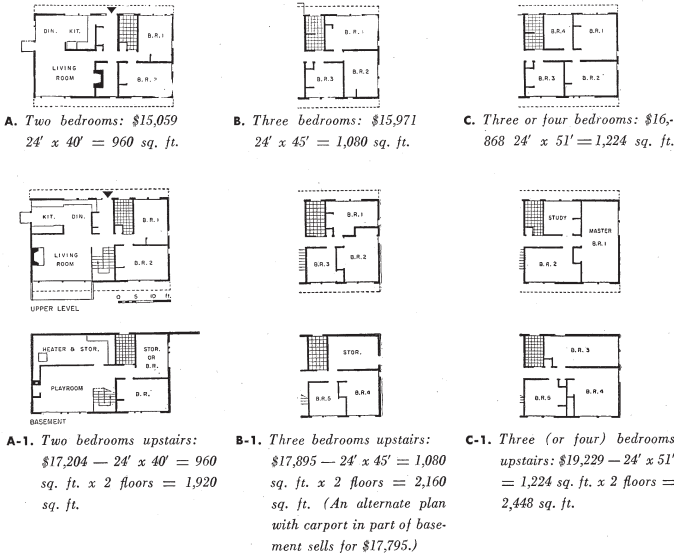
Exerpt from *A Man of Parts: Walter Gropius in Five Acts*
Part 3 by Robert Campbell - *As social theorist*

Architecture, for Gropius and others of his generation, was a branch of social reform. The architect’s responsibility was to promote the welfare of society by creating rational, economical, and well-designed places for people to live and work in.

As we might put it today, Gropius didn’t believe in “starchitects.” He wrote in his prospectus to Harvard: “The nature of teamwork will lead the students to good, ‘anonymous’ architecture rather than to flashy ‘stunt’ design.” The Gropius-trained architect would not be an ego-driven form maker but would be the democratic leader and coordinator of a team of creative people...

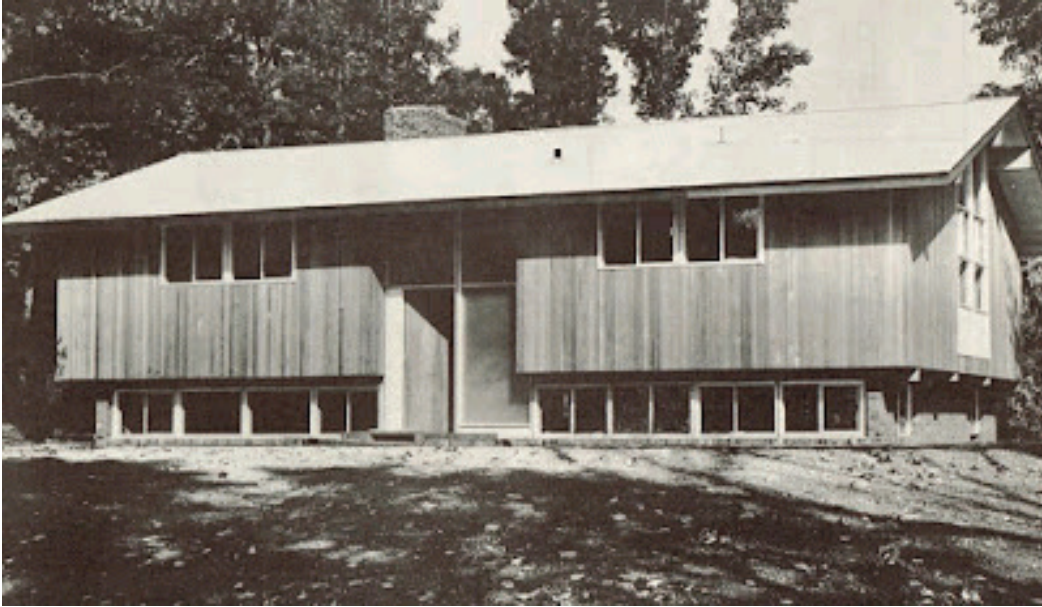
Practicing: Gropius and the firm he helped found, The Architects Collaborative, became known not for private mansions or art museums—the building types loved by high-style architects—but rather for socially responsible programs such as housing, hospitals, and schools. TAC architecture seldom drew attention to itself, but did its job while respecting its context. The very firm name is a nod to the ideal of anonymity. At Six Moon Hill in Lexington, young TAC families and their friends created a semi-commune where they lived as a group, albeit in individual houses. Their inexpensive dwellings, assembled like houses of cards from simple wall and window panels, were a metaphor for the adaptable, industrialized construction Gropius believed in.

PLAN TYPES (prices include 5% architects’ fee, \$300 planting allowance and \$1,600 “A” lot)



*Selection of plan
types for homes
in Five Fields,
from
House & Home
(1962)*

c. 1965 Techbuilt house



From Modern Mass by Bill Janovitz and John Tse
<<http://lexingtonjanovitz.com/category/techbuilt/>>

After receiving his architectural training at Harvard under Bauhaus founder, Walter Gropius, Koch taught architecture at MIT and created the first planned community of modern houses in the region at Snake Hill Road in Belmont in 1941. Prior to building in Lexington, he also designed and constructed Conantum, Concord's first residential housing development (1951) and Kendal Common in Weston (1950). First introduced in 1953, the Techbuilt house was a low-cost, semi-factory-built modern style house which used modular construction.

Source: Carl Koch, At Home with Tomorrow, 1958

The Techbuilt house was based on a consistent four foot wide module for all major building components such as wall, floor, and roof panels. The pieces were delivered by truck and could be erected in a few days. The Techbuilt homes, which include both one and two-story models, are characterized by simplicity of shape, pitched roofs and overhanging eaves and the extensive use of glass, especially on the wide glazed gabled ends. The exteriors of the houses are typically clad in vertical cedar siding with panels between the stories. The Techbuilt houses incorporated various structural innovations including the use of modular prefabricated stressed skin panels rather than conventional framing and the use of steel posts and wooden beams for support rather than load bearing walls. In keeping with Techbuilt philosophy, the houses are typically set into a natural and wooded landscape. In some cases the owners also purchased carports or garages.

The Techbuilt House was featured in various national publications including Better Homes and Gardens and Parents Magazine and was awarded the American Institute of Architects "Best Development House" Award. By the end of 1957, Techbuilt homes had been constructed in thirty-two states.